DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 297 793 JC 880 315

AUTHOR Corley, Sherie P.
TITLE The Advisory Committee and Its Role in Program Planning at the Community College.
PUB DATE Jul 88
NOTE 23p.
PUB TYPE Information Analyses (070) -- Reports - Descriptive (141)

EDRS PRICE MF01/PC01 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS *Advisory Committees; *College Planning; Community Colleges; Models; *Program Development; Program Evaluation; Two Year Colleges; *Vocational Education

ABSTRACT

A discussion is provided of the role of the advisory committee in postsecondary vocational education. First, the development of federal legislation creating advisory committees at the national and state levels, and mandating the formation and defining the duties of local advisory committees is reviewed. The next section explains the process of setting up an occupational advisory committee, covering criteria for selecting committee members, the involvement of college administrators in the organization of the first meetings, organizational structures, and committee tasks. Next, the paper stresses the importance of in-service education to keep the committee appropriately focused, of ongoing communication between the committee and the college administration, and of recognizing the contributions of the individual members of the committee. The final section presents the Oregon State Advisory Council on Career and Vocational Education as a model for the involvement of business, industry, and labor in vocational program evaluations. (EJV)

****
* Reproductions supplied by EDRS are the best that can be made *
* from the original document. *
****

ED297793

The Advisory Committee and its Role in Program Planning at the Community College

by

Sherie P. Corley

Oregon State University

Corvallis, OR 97330

BEST COPY AVAILABLE

"PERMISSION TO REPRODUCE THIS MATERIAL HAS BEEN GRANTED BY

S. P. Corley

TO THE EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC)."

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION
Office of Educational Research and Improvement
EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC)

X This document has been reproduced as received from the person or organization originating it.

☐ Minor changes have been made to improve reproduction quality.

• Points of view or opinions stated in this document do not necessarily represent official OERI position or policy

JC 880 315

The Advisory Committee and Its Role in Program Planning at the Community College

by

Sherie P. Corley

Oregon State University

Abstract

The vocational advisory committee at the community college is an important element in the planning and evaluation of a program. After a review of the federal legislation that led to the development and definition of duties of such advisory groups, the process of developing a program advisory group is discussed. With the use of research findings and the Oregon model, a system is shown that will create and manage a successful vocational advisory committee in coordination with a faculty and administration.

A vocational education program can function with limited involvement from community members. Fortunately, an educational facility does not exist in a vacuum, and its very public nature encourages those outside education to become involved to influence the type of instruction and the resulting quality of its graduates. As Willard Wirtz (1975) stated in his discussion of public participation in collaborative work with educational institutions,

> . . . the proposal rests on the conviction that enough people want very much today to reestablish their role in handling their own affairs, that this can be done most meaningfully at the local level, and that the close tying in of youths' education and what comes after it is a good assignment to start on. (pg 75)

The advisory committee or council, as a body representative of the community, became formally defined by congressional legislation because the importance of such advisory groups has come to be recognized as an effective means of improving vocational programs. What follows is a discussion of the advisory committee in postsecondary vocational education: how it functions, how a program can benefit from such a body, and how to avoid ineffectiveness in the group process. After some related legislative history on the topic is reviewed, the advisory committee will be examined in the scenario of such a committee in a program in retail sales at a community college in Oregon. The process will be followed through the first year of instruction,

the recruitment of the committee, the organization of the advisory group, and the possible topics for the committee to handle in advising the program. Then the support of the state advisory council in structuring the organization and evaluation of the committee efforts will be reviewed.

Historical Development

The advisory council or committee for vocational education, used by schools in the nation for much of their history, has been present officially since the Vocational Education Act of 1963, when the National Advisory Council was established (What is an Advisory Council, 1970); Vocational Education Act of 1963). This 21-member group of representatives from labor, management, schools, vocational education and other groups was formed to advise the President, Congress, the then Department of Health, Education, and Welfare, and the Commissioner of Education. The Council was directed to provide information on the preparation and admission of general regulations, and budget requests for the operation of vocational education, funded directly or indirectly, by the federal government.

The Vocational Education Amendment of 1968 established the requirements for state advisory councils. Although the structure specified in the legislation is not as detailed in the number of members as the 1963 Act was for the National Council, this group is directed to be composed of representatives of all educational levels--labor, business, state officials, and others. The state councils' tasks are to develop long range plans for vocational

education, to identify needs, to hold public meetings, to provide technical assistance to local advisory groups, and to report the findings to the National Advisory Council.

The Vocational Education Amendment of 1976 mandated the formation of local vocational advisory committees. At this level, membership requirements similar to those of the state council were made, representatives of labor, business, and industry, as well as minorities and both sexes, to be included.

Within this framework, a school now may have different types of advisory bodies. An advisory council consists of representatives from the occupational clusters at the school to provide advice on all vocational programs to the board of trustees and the president. The general advisory committee works with the administration and/or program director in one of the cluster areas, and the department or occupational committee is limited to dealing with the issues and concerns of those involved in a particular occupation or trade (Barton, Bowbrow, & Walsh, 1978).

The Carl Perkins Act of 1984 legislation was even more specific in detailing advisory committee duties at all levels. On the national level, a clearinghouse for information was mandated and bilingual training was emphasized. The state boards received additional money to analyze sex bias and stereotyping, and to establish technical committees to advise the development of model curricula. The state advisory councils were required to have a majority of their members from private sector employment.

The submission of detailed, five-year state plan reports to the National Board was relaxed to allow greater flexibility, although two-year plans were still required. The state was directed to review 20% of its programs annually. The advisory committee was also to review itself in relation to how it saw its work and how the group perceives that its efforts were responded to by the department, administration, and the community.

Development of an Advisory Committee

What is the process of setting up an occupational advisory committee? (To explain the steps, a hypothetical situation will be used, but it is meant to be representative of the process used in Oregon vocational programs.) An instructor has been hired for a community college retail sales vocational instructor position during the summer, to begin teaching in the fall term. The coursework is a combination of classroom instruction followed by on-the-job training in the local community. The program is relatively new; there is no existing retail sales advisory committee, and the college president has directed the department to form one by the end of the school year to comply with the state and federal mandates.

Authorities suggest that the formation of a committee should not be hastily undertaken (Finch & McGough, 1976). An instructor new to an area will not understand the political structure of a community or be familiar with the retail industry personnel. Part of the first-year process, then, will be the meeting of the school personnel and the supervisors in retail placement sites,

developing relationships with new retail location managers, and communicating with program graduates in the market place for input.

The community college department itself will have formed a departmental or occupational advisory committee, and the school should already have an advisory council; therefore, regular attendance of the new instructor at these meetings will provide invaluable overt and subliminal information for him or her on process, placement opportunities, and political divisions in the community. The department chair will undoubtedly have suggestions as to centers of influence and significant others (those who have influence on others in the community) to involve in the committee, and other faculty members may volunteer information to both the target instructor and the committee.

Committee Selection Process

The process of familiarization with the community should be pursued in the fall, resulting in a list of advisory committee candidates compiled by the instructor and community volunteers, for the department chair and college president's approval by early spring. Those chosen should be made aware of being nominated prior to receiving the invitation.

What should be the criteria for selection? Finch and McGough (1982) suggest that there should be a balance between size and representation. Too large a committee will be unwieldy, but too small a group will not adequately represent the spectrum of the community. Industry representatives should be included in

this group from organized labor as well as store or department managers. At the same time, concentrated effort should be made to involve both sexes, varying ages, and minorities. In the last case, Dunn and Hoerner's (1984) research suggests that minorities are frequently not included in the advisory committee membership, and this is one reason why attention needs to be paid to include these under represented groups, especially as the same minorities may well be a rich source of students as well as expertise.

Personality characteristics are also crucial. A desire to improve the field and an interest in occupational education must exist in each committee member (Dunham, Simmons, Whitten, Harris, Gentry, 1978). Norton (1976) suggests further characteristics:

The respect of the people they work for;

Intelligence, integrity, and courage;

Enthusiasm;

The ability to work well in groups;

Time available to work with the committee; and

A cooperative, civic-minded, and responsible attitude.

Some of these characteristics suggest only people who are already involved in committee work so that they know the process and have experience in working with others in this fashion, but such a background is not mandatory for all members. To anticipate those too active in other pursuits to accept a position, more individuals should be nominated than are actually necessary. In contacting the nominees, the letter should come from the highest authority--in this case, the president of the college. The

letter should include information as to the reason for the committee's existence, members' roles, and the importance of service. Even though the initial members will begin at the same time, a staggering of terms will need to be arranged to promote continuity and give the less-experienced members of the committee time to grow into their positions under the direction of those well-versed in the workings of an advisory committee.

To organize the first meetings and to lay a firm foundation for future efficiency, an administrator from the college will conduct and chair the first phase (Wenrich & Wenrich, 1974). However, this period will be as brief as is feasible, and the committee will elect its own chair, who must be a lay person and not an instructor. The reason for a lay chair is that the committee represents the community, and such a task would be difficult if an instructor directed the actions of the group. The department will then continue to provide support services, organize information, and relay issues that need to be considered in relation to the program and the school calendar (Oades & Deeds, 1978). Support services include written agendas and summations of previous meeting activities, a meeting place, notice of the meeting time, information packets on the topics to be discussed, and meeting refreshments. The instructor and the committee chair will meet ahead of time to plan the agenda. (If, upon election to the position, the chair is unfamiliar with the duties of the position, most state education departments have printed material and/or workshops to provide assistance.)

Committee Organization

The structure or lack of structure of the advisory committee can vary with the style of the chair and the members. Dunn and Hoerner's study (1984) has shown that a rigid organization is not always necessary. For those unfamiliar with parliamentary procedure or who would prefer a formal charter, samples are available. Knapp (1987) provided a checklist for advisory groups to use to evaluate the quality of the group organization. Ultimately, each committee must find its own effective style.

Committee Tasks

The functions of the advisory committee are varied, but Cochran, Phelps, and Cochran (1980) have classified the functions under seven general topics:

1. Curriculum content advisement
2. Equipment, facilities, and instruction resources review
3. Community resource coordination
4. Career guidance and placement services
5. Program evaluation
6. Community public relations
7. Professional development (pg 58)

The new instructor in retail sales will need help in determining that all of these areas are dealt with, for initially the curriculum demands his or her attention. Questions to be asked related to curriculum concern matters such as these: is the new course work applicable to the vocational opportunities in the community? Are the students receiving proper classroom

instruction in relation to work experience placement? Are work experience sites satisfied with the skill level of the students? Is the program serving the needs of the immediate and greater community? These are just some of the areas in which the committee can be of assistance to the instructor at the spring meeting by performing research and reporting the findings back to the instructor (Coleman & Lawrence, 1984). The key to asking for help is that the teacher must be willing to accept advice. In a like manner, if the instructor is more knowledgeable in an area than committee members, such as in how to teach the courses, then he or she should not direct them to provide input in that area (Garrity, 1984).

The late spring or early summer meeting should find the committee ready to make its recommendations and then begin assisting in directed tasks, such as community resource gathering and public relations efforts. The fall meeting may have as its central focus the program budget for the next school year, and the instructor should be able to report back to the group what has happened in the program from the assistance that was provided by the committee.

The frequency of the meetings is up to the department, instructor, chair, and/or committee members. Logically, the group will meet as often as it is necessary to complete assigned tasks. (Some states specify at least one meeting a school year.) In the discussion of the case wherein a new committee is formed, more frequent meetings, three or four times during the school

year, would be better for the first year or two. Meeting times must be as convenient as is possible to avoid time conflicts; as some committee guidelines specify two absences as a voluntary resignation from the committee, the advantage of an appropriate time selection, where members come prepared to work, is clear.

Problem Areas in Committee Management

Dunn and Hoerner (1984) concluded in their study of effective advisory bodies that there were five common characteristics to be found in successful committees, and they are listed on the following page. The advisory committee should be an asset to a program, or its existence is not necessary. As in many situations, there are as many guidelines as to what not to do as what to do.

One of the keys to success is the selection and composition of the committee members. The dynamics of the group can be affected by one negative or unproductive member. Ineffective members need to be replaced with active contributors, but the committee itself has to come to this conclusion rather than the department or instructor.

The second element of success that will eliminate many potential problems is in-service training for the committee members on what their roles are on the committee. A general orientation session, offered access to library materials, and historical orientation to problems experienced by the institution and/or program are just some of the suggested topics to cover to give those who have had experience in private industry but little

ADVISORY COMMITTEE

Effective Components

- composition
- leadership
- defined tasks
- staff support
- community relations

contact with educational institutions. These sessions will impart an understanding of what is expected and needed from the group. Administrative personnel, possibly the college president, should participate in the in-service education (Oem, 1985).

Over and above the education of the members as a whole, a special part of the in-service education should be directed to the committee chair. This role must be clearly understood. The chair must be a facilitator rather than the decision maker of the group so that the concerns of all can be voiced. A dominating chair can use the committee as a rubber stamp or vehicle for one person's ideas if he or she does not have a clear understanding of the committee process (Wenrich & Wenrich, 1974).

The committee must keep its mission in focus so it will not delve into tasks it was not assigned to pursue. An advisory committee is not a board of directors and therefore does not involve itself in policy making decisions. Recommendations, rather than policy, are the domain of the committee to, as its name implies, give advice. The members will need to remain cognizant of the differences between public relations activities and political controversies. Such conflicts can seriously damage the effectiveness of the advisory committee (Cochran et al, 1980).

Much of the quality of the work of the committee depends on the skills of the instructor(s) working with the group. He or they must give specific tasks and guidelines for the members. Vague, inappropriate topics will yield unusable information. The

direction of the support information by the instructor(s)--the sending out of meeting time notices, complete with topical information packets, and the results summarized in a follow-up notice--is crucial for the efficiency of the group.

The relationship of the committee to administrative personnel--both at the department and college levels--has to be a strong but separate one. Consultants to college programs cited direct involvement of administrators in committee work as one of the most damaging elements in the advisory process (Phipps, 1985). Communication between the above mentioned groups needs to follow established channels, again to avoid potential political difficulties. Cooperative working relationships, however, should not be avoided if such arrangements can be well managed. As was mentioned above, many of the potential problems can be avoided by the attendance of the administrative staff in training sessions.

Keeping the general community informed is important if the program is to succeed. Communication may be extended to organizations outside the traditional school domain, involving groups important to many programs. For example, one element in the community that must be addressed is unions. Representatives from organized labor are a necessary element in the advisory body, particularly if the program graduates are to work with or compete for union jobs. The lack of a good relationship with this particular group could deal a crippling blow to a program through suspicion and innuendo, the results of a fear of encroachment in the employment market by the students. In this

environment, field placement could be difficult if not impossible (St. Claire, 1982).

Another issue is the frequent lack of recognition of the individual members of the committee, and this oversight can cause the eventual loss of enthusiasm for volunteer work. As was noted on the check list compilation by Oregon's State Advisory Council on Career and Vocational Education (1986), the responding committee members state-wide did not feel they received as much the attention as they deserved. Publications, such as Spotlight on Advisory Committees (1988), published by the Oregon State Advisory Council on Career and Vocational Education (SACCVE), are designed to provide such recognition, and the instructor, department, and/or college will need to take an active part in recommending or presenting awards to active members to supply needed pats on the back for service to the program. This publication also details postsecondary and secondary committees, summarizes related research, and current legislative activities. It is an important link from the state level to the committees in the field. This same advisory body published a manual to assist advisory groups in getting organized (Oregon SACCVE, 1984)

The Oregon Management Model

SACCVE (The Oregon State Advisory Council on Career and Vocational Education) has provided a model for the involvement of business, industry, and labor in program evaluations. The model is based on the concept that such a structuring will facilitate program improvements. The process of evaluation needs guidance,

particularly in the providing of standards to judge advisory committee effectiveness. Detailed on the following charts, the management plan is divided into five areas:

*preparation

*reporting

*planning for improvement

*management functions

The three-year cycle of action that was developed after the Carl Perkins Act (1984). The suggested activity for year one is program delivery. Year two curriculum and instruction is the project for the group. The third year emphasis is on recruitment, placement, and employer and employee followup.

The local committee is assisted by the institution. The college collects data from the advisory group and prepares reports for the members. As well as using this information to improve the management of the advisory process, the school relays these data to the state advisory council to create a body of information that will assist all levels of advisory bodies. The findings are then published in Spotlight on Advisory Committees (1988).

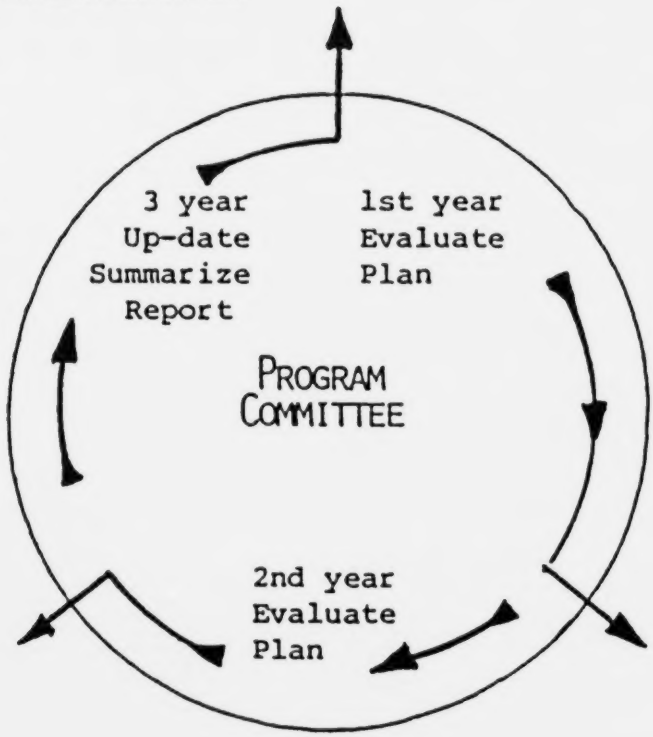
Summary

Advisory committees and councils have long been recognized as effective groups to use to involve the community in the educational process. Recent congressional legislation has defined the structure and duties of the vocational advisory committee at the national, state, and local level. An

INVOLVING BUSINESS, INDUSTRY, AND LABOR IN VOCATIONAL-TECHNICAL PROGRAM EVALUATION

A MODEL FOR LOCAL ADVISORY COMMITTEE PARTICIPATION (THREE YEAR CYCLE)

INDIVIDUAL PROGRAM EVALUATION PHASE



ACTIVITIES:

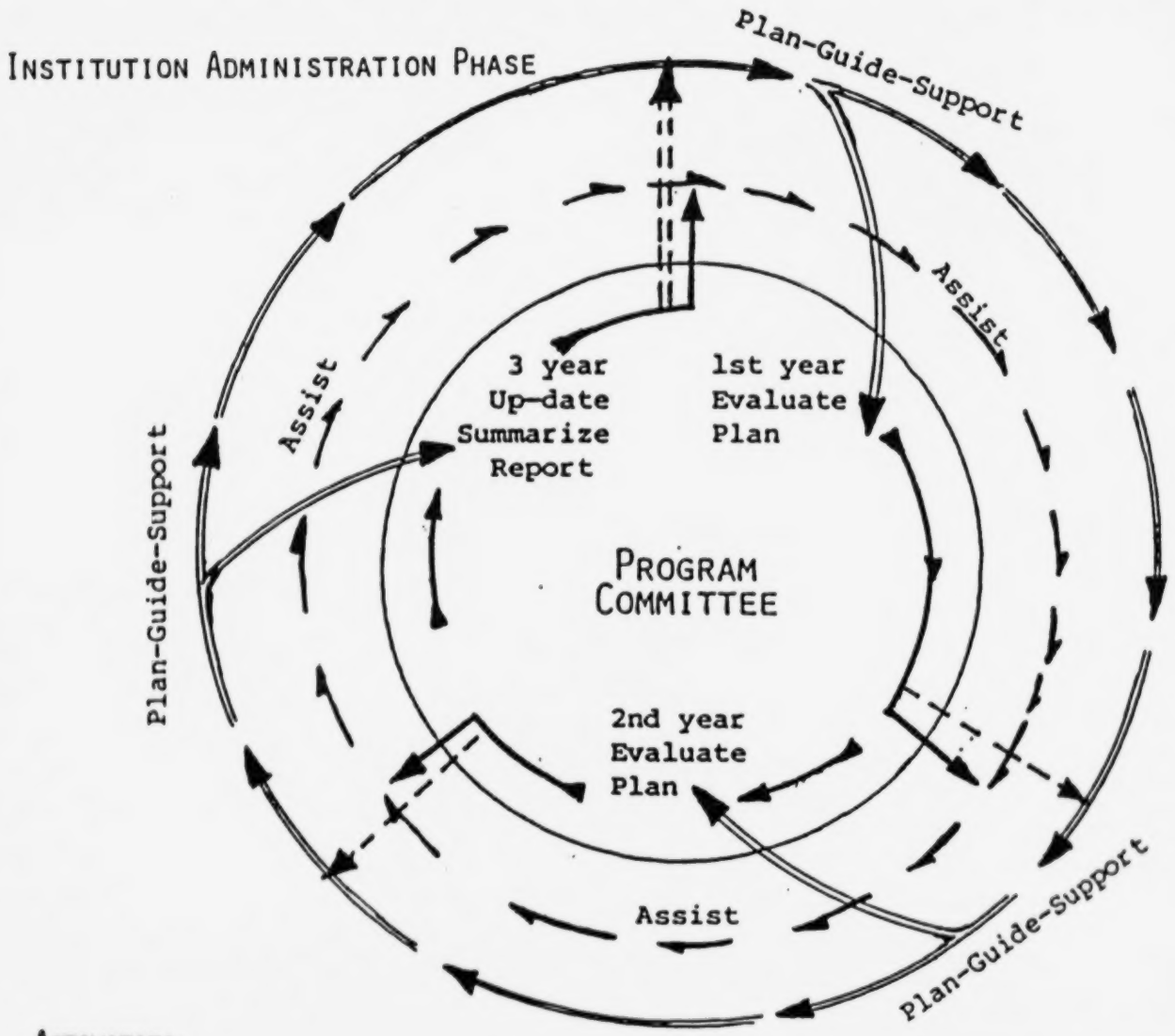
FIRST YEAR - EVALUATE QUALITY OF INSTRUCTION FACTORS - PLAN - ASSIST
SECOND YEAR - EVALUATE OTHER FACTORS OF INSTRUCTION - PLAN - ASSIST
THIRD YEAR - UP-DATE, SUMMARIZE, REPORT - ASSIST

OUTCOMES:

PROGRAM EVALUATION CONDUCTED IN PRACTICAL, TIMELY MANNER
PROGRAM IMPROVEMENTS PLANNED, ACTIVITIES OF ASSISTANCE CONDUCTED
BUSINESS/INDUSTRY/LABOR INVOLVED, SUPPORTING

INVOLVING BUSINESS, INDUSTRY, AND LABOR IN VOCATIONAL-TECHNICAL PROGRAM EVALUATION

A MODEL FOR LOCAL ADVISORY COMMITTEE PARTICIPATION (THREE YEAR CYCLE)



ACTIVITIES:

PROVIDE DIRECTION AND RESOURCES TO LOCAL COMMITTEES. COLLECT DATA FROM EVALUATION PROCESS. DEVELOP PLAN FOR INSTITUTION. WORK WITH COMMITTEES ON IMPLEMENTATION OF PLAN.

OUTCOMES:

INSTITUTIONAL STRATEGY FOR PROGRAM IMPROVEMENT. SUPERVISION OF THE ADVISORY PROCESS. PROGRAM APPROVAL. ACTIVE INVOLVEMENT AND SUPPORT OF BUSINESS, INDUSTRY, AND LABOR.

occupational advisory committee member, nominated by an instructor and approved by a higher school authority, can assist in program planning, public relations work, community resource gathering, and other tasks designed to improve the quality of the vocational program. The caliber of the selected members, particularly the chair, is crucial to the working effectiveness of the group. The structure of the meetings and the frequency of such is flexible, but the group should meet at least twice a year, and times convenient for the members is recommended. Such a committee is not without its drawbacks, such as the working effectiveness and the quality of the advice produced, but the benefits of the committee are worth the effort it takes to develop this advisory body.

References

Barton, P.E., Bowbrow, S.B., & Walsh, J.J. (1978). Policies and procedures handbook for Oregon vocational agriculture programs. Salem: Department of Agriculture Education, Oregon State University, and Oregon Department of Education.

Cochran, L.H., Phelps, L.A., & Cochran, L.L. (1980). Advisory committees in action. Boston: Allyn and Bacon.

Carl Perkins Act of 1984, P.L. 98-524.

Coleman, D., & Lawrence, D. (1984). Switching school board function to a futuristic orientation. Rural Educator, 6, pp. 1-2.

Dunham, D.B., Simmons, B.L., Whitten, B.C., Harris, P.J., & Gentry, D.K. (1978). The human element in comprehensive planning. In C.S. Lamar (Ed.), Comprehensive planning for vocational education, (pp. 134-166). Arlington, VA: American Vocational Association.

Dunn, B.P., Hoerner, J.L. (1984). Management practices associated with effective post-secondary general advisory committees of occupational education. Journal of Studies in Technical Careers, VI (4), 282-291.

Finch, C.R., McGough (1982). Administrating and Supervising Occupational Education. New Jersey: Prentice Hall, Inc.

Garrity, R.J. (1984). Curricular excellence. AAJC Journal, 55 (2), 40-41.

Knapp, A.H. (1987). Test your advisory group savvy. Vocational Education Journal. 62 (1), 22-4.

Norton, R.E. (1976). Organize and work with a local advisory committee. Columbus, OH: National Center for Research in Vocational Education, Ohio State University.

Oades, J.D., Deeds, J.P. (1978). Policies and procedures handbook for Oregon vocational agriculture programs, Salem, OR: Department of Agricultural Education, Oregon State University, and Oregon Department of Education.

Oem, U.T. (1985). Establish and conduct meetings of general and specific advisory committees. Graylake, IL: Lake County Area Vocational Center.

Oregon State Advisory Council for Career and Vocational Education. (1984). Helping shape tomorrow's work force. A reference manual for occupational advisory committees. Salem, OR: SACCVE. (ERIC Document Reproduction Service No. ED 248 345)

Oregon State Advisory Council for Career and Vocational Education. (1986). Managing business/industry/labor involvement in vocational programs. Salem, OR: SACCVE.

Phipps, L.J., & Knell, K. (1985). The how of successful advisory committee operation. Urbana, IL: University of Illinois, Urban Education Development Lab.

Oregon State Advisory Council on Career and Vocational Education. (1988). Spotlight on vocational advisory committees. Salem, OR: SACCVE.

St.Clair, D.D. (1982). Labor in industry for human enrichment: WAC labor education advisory committees. Washington D.C.: Labor Advisory Bureau for Worker Education Programs Topic Paper # 7.

Vocational Education Act U.S. Public Law 88-210 (1963).

Vocational Education Amendment 90-576 (1968).

Vocational Education Amendment 94-482 (1974).

Vocational education advisory handbook. (1981). Helena, MT: Montana State Advisory Committee.

Wenrich, R.C., & Wenrich, J.W. (1974). Leadership in administration of vocational and technical education. Columbus, OH: Charles E. Merrill Publishing Co., pp. 162-169.

What is an advisory council? (1970). Tips and Topics, Texas Tech, XI (1), 3-7.

Wirtz, W. (1975). The boundless resource: A projection for an education work policy. Washington D.C.: New Republic Book Co., pg. 75.

ERIC Clearinghouse for Junior Colleges
SEP 30 1988